

Hull on a high: Australian rallies to earn second LPGA win

By Tim Gayle • October 11, 2010

PRATTVILLE -- Under the radar.

Katherine Hull has been there most of her professional career. She was there for most of the Navistar LPGA Classic.

"I don't mind chasing," Hull said. "It is kind of nice to lead, though."

Suddenly on Sunday's final round, at the 17th hole, the Australian's birdie put her one stroke ahead of everyone else.

Hull tapped in a five-foot birdie for par on the final hole to hold off Brittany Lincicome and Cristie Kerr to win the tournament on the Senator Course at the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail Capitol Hill.

It was just the second professional win in 164 tournaments for Hull, who turned pro in 2004.

"It's a little overwhelming, actually," she said. "It probably won't hit me until later. I'm definitely on a high right now. I probably won't come down for a while."

The three entered the back nine in search of the title, and Lincicome's 7-under 65 put her in strong contention for a playoff at 18-under for the tournament. Kerr played the final hole at 18-under as well, struggling all day to find the magic that had put her atop the leaderboard for the first three days of the tournament.

"I started off fairly well, but just couldn't get any of the putts to go in," Kerr said. "I just couldn't quite get it as close to the hole. The reads were a little bit off, hitting was a little bit off, everything was kind of a little bit off. I couldn't get any momentum going."

Hull, meanwhile, had played nearly flawless since a bogey on the 17th hole on Thursday. She was never flashy, just steady as she approached the 17th hole for the fourth time Sunday.

Just as she had on Saturday, the Pepperdine graduate sank a birdie putt and was suddenly at 19-under, a stroke ahead of Kerr and Lincicome.

"I was a little frustrated I missed that putt on 16 because that was a really good chance," Hull said. "When that putt dropped on 17, I kind of breathed a sigh of relief because it's always nice to go into 18 with a one-shot lead."

Lincicome took a seat to the left of the green and watched to see if Hull would falter, resulting in a playoff. Instead, it was Kerr who fell apart. She drove her second shot past the green, missed the third shot for birdie and a chance at a playoff, then missed the par putt and dropped into a third-place tie with NaYeon Choi at 17-under.

"I was aiming five yards left of the hole and it was going right," Kerr said. "I've been fighting that all week. Today, things just didn't go my way. If I had played half as well as I had played the first three days, it would have been no contest."

Hull, facing a 50-foot putt for birdie, came up five feet short on her third shot. She then calmly sank her par putt for her first victory since winning the Canadian Women's Open in 2008 for her first pro victory.

"Cristie and I both were a little flat on the front nine," Hull said. "I finished up early (Saturday) so I had that in the back of my mind, that I could finish strong and it wasn't going to be over until the 72nd hole and that's what happened."

Steady, but not flashy. A little bit under the radar, but not so far back that a Sunday run at a championship wasn't possible. That was the game Hull played on Sunday, shooting her third consecutive 5-under 67. In 12 previous rounds at the Navistar Classic, Hull had managed a 67 just twice, never shooting below 69 in the other 10 rounds in 2007, 2008 and 2009.

"She played very well," Kerr said. "That's probably some of the best golf I've seen her play. She was making the putts and I wasn't. That was the difference."

In her last LPGA outing, at the P&G NW Arkansas Championship, Hull had failed to make the cut. On Sunday, she was hoisting the tournament trophy for the first time this season.

"I feel like my game's the best it's ever been," Hull said. "It's going to get better, too. But I've always struggled to put four good rounds together and I was able to do that this week."